

ASIA - PACIFIC CONSULTATION ON EAST TIMOR.STATEMENT

Delegates from 13 countries attended the first Asia - Pacific Consultation on East Timor, held in Manila, Philippines, 16-18 November 1987. Participants included representatives of the two Timorese political parties, UDT and Fretilin, officials of several International Church networks, human rights and development agencies and delegates from Asia, Pacific and European solidarity groups.

The Consultation was convened to consolidate and expand emerging concerns on the issue within Asian and Pacific Church and Community Organizations.

ANALYSIS

In its analysis of the issue the Consultation highlighted the following points:

1. East Timor remains a major military problem for Indonesia. This is clear from the number of combat troops in the territory, the special command structures directly controlled from Jakarta, the tight internal security situation and continued denial of external access.
2. The Indonesian presence in East Timor is not just a military occupation but is increasingly colonial in character. The economy is controlled by monopolies dominated by the Indonesian elite and social, cultural and political life has been structured to serve Indonesian interests at the expense of the East Timorese people who are systematically excluded, marginalised and powerless.
3. Gross human rights violations continue with varying intensity. However it also needs to be recognized that the ever present climate of fear, restrictions on free communication, legal rights, assembly and travel are now institutionalised in East Timor. The suppression of East Timorese culture and the systematic Indonesianisation of Timorese society also constitute an abuse of rights fundamental to the preservation of Timorese identity.

4. Timorese armed resistance to integration remains seemingly indestructible and is a powerful symbol of East Timorese opposition to the annexation. However it also should be recognized that the less well known attitudes of East Timorese at all levels of society including clergy, civil servants, students, and village people are testimony that opposition to integration remains entrenched throughout East Timor. This is also reflected in the decision of the two major Timorese political parties, UDT and Fretilin, to work together in the political struggle for independence.
5. The local Catholic Church has grown rapidly to become a mass organization to which most Timorese adhere. It is administered directly from the Vatican through an Apostolic Administrator and is not formally part of the Indonesian Church. The Timorese Church continues to call for an end to conflict and human rights abuses and for a just settlement, and for greater freedom to fulfil its heavy pastoral responsibilities. The Church is subjected to considerable political pressure, both externally and internally, and keenly feels its isolation. It needs increased support and contact particularly from the international church community.
6. Western and regional economic, political, military and security ties with Indonesia constitute a major barrier to the advancement of the Timorese cause. Regionally this is exemplified in the interdependence of the Japanese and Indonesian economies, ASEAN political commitments to Indonesia, the active cooperation with Indonesia of other governments in the region particularly Australia and Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia's increasing drive to extend its political influence in the South Pacific.
7. East Timor has not been voted on at the United Nations General Assembly since 1982 and Indonesia continues a major diplomatic and disinformation campaign to quash any discussion on the issue. Nevertheless East Timor remains an issue of active concern to a range of United Nations bodies and to many international and national forums, involving governments, political parties, parliaments, churches and non-governmental organizations.

KEY AREAS FOR ACTION

1. United Nations

- a. At its session in Geneva in February 1988 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights will consider the human rights situation in East Timor. It is recommended that member states of the Commission, particularly those from Asia, be urged:

- * To support a continuing review by the Commission of the human rights situation in East Timor and
- * To endorse calls for the full participation of the East Timorese people in future United Nations sponsored talks on the issue.

- b. Talks on East Timor held between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General have not allowed for formal East Timorese participation.

It is recommended that representations to the Secretary-General urging full Timorese participation be intensified. There will be no lasting settlement without Timorese cooperation.

Such representations should also express dismay at the inadequacy of official United Nations reports on the issue.

- c. The United Nations Committee on Decolonization will hear petitions on East Timor in August 1988 in New York.

It is recommended that strong NGO and government submissions be made, particularly from within the Asia-Pacific region.

2. Portugal

Ambiguity in recent statements on East Timor by the Portuguese Government, which has a major responsibility for ensuring a just settlement of the issue, is cause for alarm, as is Portugal's failure to ensure Timorese participation in the talks process.

It is recommended that representations be made to the Portuguese Government on these failures.

It is further recommended that expressions of concern on Portugal's role be made to Portuguese Church bodies, political parties and the Parliamentary Commission on East Timor.

It is also recommended that Portugal be urged to recognize UDT and Fretilin and to materially support their work.

3. The Church

Because of the disputed political status of the territory, the Holy See has assumed direct responsibility for the Catholic Church of East Timor.

It is recommended that the Holy See be urged at every opportunity, particularly by Catholic bodies, to maintain its direct jurisdiction over the diocese of Dili until a just solution has been achieved based on the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination.

It is further recommended that the World Council of Churches and the International Protestant Community be urged to dialogue directly with the Christian community in East Timor in a spirit of solidarity and common commitment to justice and peace.

It is also recommended that churches be urged to sign the document 'East Timor: A Christian Reflection' as part of their overall effort of Christian Education and advocacy on East Timor.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following broad action proposals were agreed to by the Consultation participants:

1. The provision of basic information on the issue for the wider community;

2. The regular information servicing of key non-governmental networks in Asia and the Pacific;
3. The establishment of support networks in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines;
4. Monitoring and lobbying of the principal non-UN political forums;
5. The documentation of the effects of the Indonesian occupation and colonization of East Timor on women and on children.
6. The encouragement of human rights, humanitarian and other organizations to seek independent access to East Timor.

The Consultation participants sent messages of concern regarding East Timor to the Japanese, Philippines and Portuguese Governments and the United Nations Secretary-General. Messages of solidarity were sent to the Timorese people and the European and North American support network. It was resolved to reconvene at an appropriate time in the future.

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18 November 1987